GAMES

The Pathetic and Predictable World of Gaming Grifters

For Anyone Reading This Who Isn't Also Terminally Online: I'm Sorry

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2 1 Share

Since Elon Musk bought Twitter and renamed it to a letter of the alphabet(masterful gambit, sir) it has become inundated with a variety of awful people, and a lot of bots letting you know they have something in their bio, maybe you're interested? I guess to defeat the bots, they first had to be lulled into a false sense of security? Among these awful people, one particular stripe has become more and more prevalent in my feed, and they love nothing more than sucking all the oxygen they can from the space and using it to get people less clever than them to give them money.

I'm talking, of course, about gaming grifters. The fragile men, and handful of women, who are constantly up in arms about such "controversies" as minor costume alterations to the main character in the game *Stellar Blade*, the new *Assassin's Creed* having a Black(gasp!), but historically factual samurai character, or in the case of Kotaku's Alyssa Mercante, who has become the focus of many of these grifter's ire, simply writing something they don't like or agree with.

These are people lacking any real, substantial convictions beyond "give me money and attention". Their arguments, for lack of a better term, are disingenuous and full of more holes than Bonny and Clyde's Ford V8.

They are charlatans who offer simple solutions to any variety of perceived problems one might be facing, and all they ask in return is your unwavering attention, a willingness to ignore objectivity in all its forms, and your money. *Always* your money. They're fighting for you! The least you can do is throw a few bucks their way, right?

Let's talk about one of these intellectual giants leading the War Against Wokeness.

Meet The Grummz

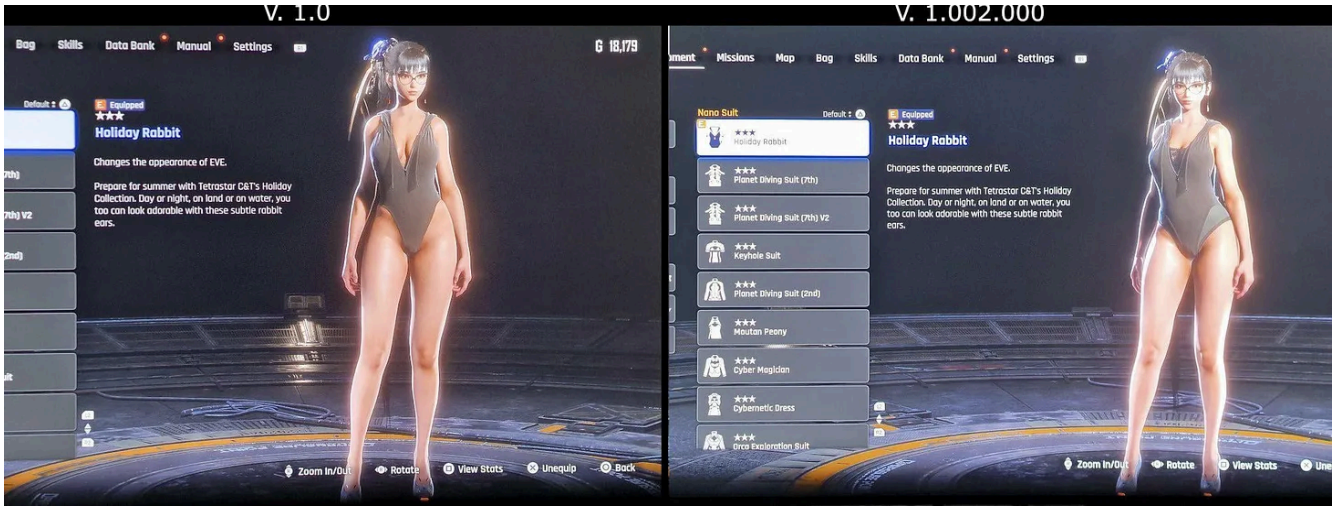
This image is in reference to the revelation that Helldivers 2, a very obvious satire about space fascists waging war against a race of bugs not dissimilar to the ones in Starship Troopers, might be political. You also fight robots that look like Terminators, but I'm sure that is also purely coincidental.

The most persistently irritating of the entire lot, is a 56 year old man named Mark Kern, AKA Grummz, whose claim to fame is working on Blizzard hits that came out a whole generation ago, such as *World of Warcraft*, *Diablo II*, and *Starcraft*. Kern is quick to remind anyone who questions his wisdom that he worked on some of the biggest games that came out back then. He's like a musician who had a string of a few big hits back in the late 90s and early 00s before becoming a member of the county fair concert circuit, doing whatever it takes to remind an audience, no matter how small or gullible, that he's someone still worth listening to.

Since leaving Blizzard in 2006 Kern has had an illustrious career that has involved being ousted as CEO of his company, Red 5, after spending $3 million on a bus meant to promote *FireFall*, an MMO Red 5 developed and released to tepid reviews, and which has long since been shut down. Since 2016, Kern has supposedly been working on a "spiritual successor" to *FireFall* called *Em8er*, whose nearly decade long development cycle has nothing to show other than some barebones demos, and "skins" that by all appearances seem to be nothing more than JPEGs of sexy anime ladies.

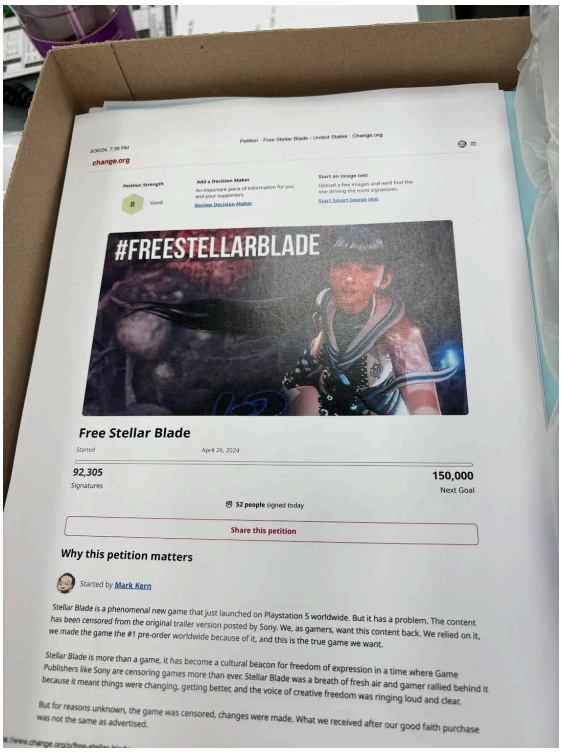
Kern cares *a lot* about sexy anime ladies. Perhaps in a way a no 56 year old man who has a family should. Not without raising more than a few eyebrows anyway. Kern spearheaded the "#FreeStellarBlade" movement, which spawned after eagle-eyed gamers

noticed some of the player character's outfits had been, in their minds, "censored". Below you can see for yourself these outrageous changes made to Eve's wardrobe. Surely Sony, or some other evil actor inspired these changes. This is killing art! This is about so much more than a piece of fabric making a collection of polygon's cleavage slightly less visible! These people are sick and want to kill you and everyone you care about! This is war!



The image on the left, is the original, uncensored, non-woke, and intended version of this particular costume. If you look to the right you can see what the woke mob hath wrought.

Kern began a change.org petition to "Free Stellar Blade", which eventually garnered over 92K signatures. He even went so far as to send SHIFT UP, the developers, a printed copy of the petition. You can read about the whole saga, here, in an excellent summarization written by Kotaku's Ethan Gach .


change.org
#FREESTELLARBLADE
Free Stellar Blade
92,305
Signatures
150,000
Next Goal
52 people signed today
Share this petition
Why this petition matters
Started by Mark Kern
Stellar Blade is a phenomenal new game that just launched on Playstation 5 worldwide. But it has a problem. The content has been censored from the original trailer version posted by Sony. We, as gamers, want this content back. We relied on it, we made the game the #1 pre-order worldwide because of it, and this is the true game we want.
Stellar Blade is more than a game, it has become a cultural beacon for freedom of expression in a time where Game Publishers like Sony are censoring games more than ever. Stellar Blade was a breath of fresh air and gamer rallied behind it because it meant things were changing, getting better, and the voice of creative freedom was ringing loud and clear.
But for reasons unknown, the game was censored, changes were made. What we received after our good faith purchase was not the same as advertised.

I'm sure this is being proudly displayed in the SHIFT UP offices, and wasn't promptly put in the recycling.

The best part? The head of the studio himself said the "censored" version of the outfits that players were so worked up about were the intended versions all along.

> **Q. Though the game was not supposed to have any censorship issue before the 'Day 1 patch', there are some rumors censorship has been applied after the day one patch. Are you willing to provide an option where people can choose to download the patch or not?**
>
> We are aware of the issue and we would like to address that the final product we intended was the 1.0.0.2 version. I can assure you that was our fianl product. We can't promise you anything right now, but we are discussing the issue internally and hopefully we can make an official statement later. - minimap.net

In traditional grifter fashion, Kern responded to this revelation by doing what a grifter does, admitting no mistakes made on their part, and reminding their followers that there was still a good chance their claims were true, the person or group in question just can't talk about it. See how easy that is? When reality is whatever you say it is, why would you ever need to hold yourself accountable?

> "[Shift Up] made some bad marketing choices, and either shipped outfits they liked better, or were silently censored by Sony," Kern wrote in an update to the petition trying to rationalize the "free Stellar Blade" fight in the face of the director's own dienals. "In the end, that is less important than the overall win that we are getting here in this long term battle. They are fighting to the best of their ability, and they also make mistakes." - Kotaku

Stellar Blade is just one of many performative outrage campaigns Kern has led the charge in. Here is an abbreviated list:

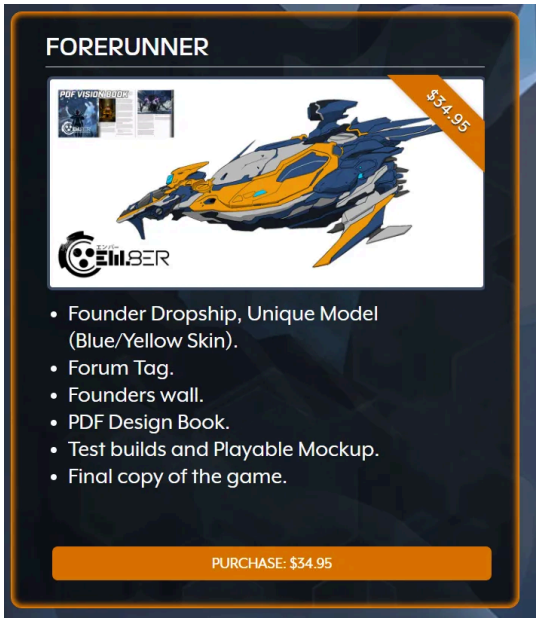
- *Helldivers II*
- Sweet Baby Inc
- Alyssa Mercante of Kotaku
- The jawline of Joanna Dark in the new *Perfect Dark*
- DEI
- Wokeness
- *Assassin's Creed Shadows* having a playable Black protagonist

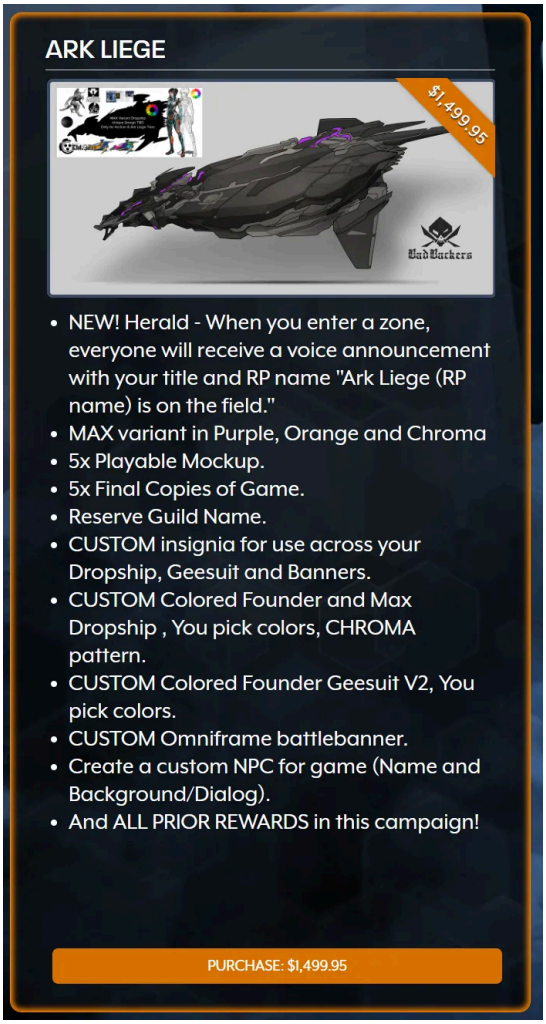
And Kern's most oft repeated suggestion when people ask, "How can I help? How can I contribute to this righteous and just cause?"

Give him money, of course.

Subscribe to his Twitter account for $5/month so he can keep fighting the woke mob that is hellbent on seeing him dead.

Perhaps you'd be interested in purchasing one of the many Founder's Packs on offer for his very real video game, *Em8er*? They offer a variety of bundles that can fit almost any budget. From a modest $34.95 to an eye watering $1,500. Have I mentioned Em8er has been in development since 2016, and is in nowhere near a playable state? Probably best to not think about it too much before giving him some of your money.




ARK LIEGE
$1,499.95
NEW! Herald - When you enter a zone, everyone will receive a voice announcement with your title and RP name "Ark Liege (RP name) is on the field."
MAX variant in Purple, Orange and Chroma
5x Playable Mockup.
5x Final Copies of Game.
Reserve Guild Name.
CUSTOM insignia for use across your Dropship, Geesuit and Banners.
CUSTOM Colored Founder and Max Dropship , You pick colors, CHROMA pattern.
CUSTOM Colored Founder Geesuit V2, You pick colors.
CUSTOM Omniframe battlebanner.
Create a custom NPC for game (Name and Background/Dialog).
And ALL PRIOR REWARDS in this campaign!
PURCHASE: $1,499.95

And that is a little bit about Mark Kern, whose mission in life is to spend as little time as possible with his actual family because it's more important to score points with

strangers on the internet who are gullible enough to buy whatever it is you're peddling.

If you happen to find his account on Twitter, he loves nothing more than people simply replying, "Grummz" to all of his posts.

They Are Harming Real People

As with the original GamerGate, any cultural outrage campaign in the video game space wouldn't be complete without at least one woman becoming the target of a concerted and lengthy harassment campaign, and this latest desperate campaign is no exception. Enter Kotaku's Alyssa Mercante.

Alyssa Mercante: GoonerGate Enemy #1

Alyssa Mercante is the current Senior Editor of Kotaku, a crime in an of itself to Kern and his ilk. She also writes things that the people Kern's orbit cannot abide. I had the opportunity to interview Mercante for Hard Drive at the beginning of May this year, and we talked at length about the harassment campaign that has been doing its utmost to make her life on and offline as miserable as possible.

Mercante has been doxed, sent rape and death threats, has had topless photos of her shared in the replies of Kotaku articles(which by her own admission she has been

unfazed by, but this obviously could be very distressing to others in the same situation), been the subject of more lazily produced YouTube videos than the JFK assassination, and is a constant target of the disciples of Grummz, SmashJT, and any other performative outrage grifter with a webcam and OBS installed on their computer who willing to shout into a microphone to turn a quick buck.

The trouble began when Mercante talked to some of the employees at Sweet Baby Inc., a video game consulting company that employs 16 people, and depending on who you ask, is single handedly destroying the industry by injecting DEI and "woke ideologies" into video games. It's quite diabolical and very impressive. Blackrock, the VC firm, among other shadowy financial institutions are all involved. Kudos to them for having such a wide reaching influence with such a small staff.

Of course, none of this is true. Nathan Grayson of Aftermath wrote at length about this conspiracy theory if you'd like to learn more.

Sweet Baby Inc., in their own words, does the following:

> Founded in 2018, Sweet Baby Inc. is a narrative development and consultation studio based in Montreal and working around the globe. Our mission is to tell better, more empathetic stories while diversifying and enriching the video games industry. We aim to make games more engaging, more fun, more meaningful, and more inclusive, for everyone. - Sweet Baby Inc. home page

Mercante spoke with employees of Sweet Baby Inc., members of the Sweet Baby Inc. Detected Discord before being booted, and then wrote about it on Kotaku. This was the inciting incident that sparked the still ongoing harassment campaign.

SmashJT, a YouTuber I was unfamiliar with prior to this saga, has uploaded dozens of videos about Mercante, all with sensationalized titles and photos of Mercante in the thumbnails. The titles and videos themselves are as predictable and unimaginative as you would expect from a middle-aged man with a wife and kids who would rather upload daily videos about how "woke gaming journos" are "coping and seething" than spend time with his family. It's all very normal stuff.

Most recently, while on the panel for Giant Bomb at Nite Day 1 during Summer Game Fest, Mercante revealed that a treasure trove of FireFall merch was sent to her by a dev who worked on the game, that she would be auctioning these items off to support a trans charity, and also challenged anyone who had a problem with her saying the games industry is diverse naturally, that the world is diverse, to fight her. This challenge did not go unanswered, but because of the inherently slippery and disingenuous nature of the influencers in the gaming grifter space it became apparent they were never serious about the challenge. Not unless they could find a way to make money on it of course.

It's always about the money.

These Men Are Cowards

The most frustrating aspect of engaging with any of these people is that regardless of whether or not you prove them wrong, or their predictions don't come to fruition(spoiler: they never do), or otherwise disprove their asinine point, it doesn't matter. They have either moved on to the next thing they are telling their audience to be upset about, or have contorted *themselves* into the victim because someone, usually a journalist, has taken a critical look into their chicanery. Either way, in theirs and their audience's minds, they are the victor and you are just another member of the woke mob trying to silence them for daring speak truth to power.

They have no convictions, no scruples, no moral compass beyond "give me money and attention", and while engaging with them is often fruitless and always mentally taxing it's hard to ignore them completely when good people are swept up in their performative outrage. But then, I suppose Kern harassing people he doesn't like on the internet is far easier than finishing Em8er.

2 Likes · 1 Restack

Comments

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